Guide to March Radness 2022

Community NerdyBirdy Mar 14, 2022

It’s finally time for March Radness 2022 to start, head-to-head competition that pits the most popular games as the Xbox community decides on which games will reign supreme. This year, we’ve separated the games in a single bracket with four regional categories of Best Artwork, Best Musical Score, Best Storyline, and Best Gameplay.

Too Big To Fail

At the top of every March Radness bracket are the top overall seeds. This year is no different, with a few games that are unlikely to lose out to all but the most popular and beloved games. This year features two of the strongest games in recent memory as #1 seeds.

Hades: The winner of awards as diverse and prestigious as the Nebula, Hugo, and British Academy Games, Hades is one of the strongest and most universally acclaimed games in recent years. With an incredible storyline, art direction, voice acting, and musical score, Hades sold over a million copies in the last year alone. The giant from Supergiant Games is likely a lock for this year’s finals.

Halo Infinite: The latest edition of arguably the most beloved Xbox franchise in the platform’s history, Halo Infinite is expected to blow through its bracket in this year’s March Radness. The game’s new open-world design, new gameplay features, and compelling story has critics calling it one of the best in the series. Bet against Master Chief’s newest installment at your own peril.

Image: Xbox Game Studios

The Higher They Are, The Harder They Fall

March Radness wouldn’t be complete without a few stunning upsets. There’s nothing like a head-to-head matchup to expose the deficiencies and shortcomings of a game and this year has several top games with creeping vulnerabilities.

The Yakuza Remastered Collection: Is the Yakuza series one of the most popular, most innovative, most generally interesting video game series in Japanese gaming history? Yes. But is the most recent installment going to ride on the series’ collective popularity, or fall as the voters take on newer, more original games?

Yes, the graphics are better. Yes, the gameplay is smoother. But does this mean the fans are going to vote for what they already have seen before over their new favorite of the last year? We’ll see.

Forza Horizon 5: I know what you’re thinking. A potential upset for the single biggest launch in Xbox Game Studio’s history? The ten million players

within the first week alone? The winner of three nominations and two awards at the Game Awards 2021? That Forza Horizon 5?

Yes, I know Forza Horizon 5 is one of last year's giants, and yes, it deserves top billing as a #1 seed. But at the same time, the game went from 80,000 daily players at release to less than 16,000 just a month later. And much of its initial popularity has been attributed to its status as the unquestioned most prestigious game to have a day one launch on Xbox Game Pass. And we all know it's certainly a lot easier to give a new AAA game a spin when you don't have to buy it.

But what's the buzz since then? From its mostly empty open world setting to a perfectly ordinary soundtrack (do you really need your Xbox to listen to Dua Lipa?), to an utterly forgettable storyline, Forza Horizon 5 isn't revealing much replayability. Despite this, Forza's legion of fans is likely to steamroll all but the most popular games in the bracket. Still, in some ways it won't be a complete surprise if Forza makes an unexpected early exit.

Bracket Busters

Every March Radness has its dark horses. The games that fly under the radar only to upset AAA giants, and crash through entire brackets.

Celeste: One of the best-selling indie games of the last decade, Celeste received rave reviews for its story, visual art, and characters. Depending on its bracket, Celeste is poised for a strong breakthrough. While it's been several years since the game's release, it continues to be a popular fan favorite. Look for Celeste to tear through some brackets, especially for art direction and story.

Sable: No, Sable doesn't feature combat. And no, it doesn't even have a fail state. Referred to as the "chillest game since Animal Crossing", Sable's laid-back gameplay may admittedly have been too relaxed for some.

Image: Raw Fury

But where it lacks in heart-pounding adrenaline rushes, it more than makes up for with a profoundly beautiful art style, a storyline crafted by award-winning writer Meg Jayanth, and a superb soundtrack from the band Japanese Breakfast. Sable is likely to be a tough competitor in any bracket.

Sneaky Semi-Finals Picks

It’s not unusual for an overlooked seed to make its way into the semi-finals and this year is no different. Don’t be surprised to see these two games make their way to the last rounds.

It Takes Two: Sometimes it feels like the true co-op game is a dying thing of the past. Many of the top releases now always seem to be ludicrously intricate single-player sagas, or frenetically paced multiplayers. But every so often a true co-op comes along like It Takes Two.

With truly innovative gameplay mechanics that force cooperation between two players, It Takes Two won gamers’ hearts on its way towards Gamer of the Year at The Game Awards in 2021. It wouldn’t be shocking to see similar success this March Radness.

Stardew Valley: It might be strange to consider that a farming sim from 2016 could end up the winner of March Radness 2022, but not every game is a Stardew Valley. Possibly the best-selling indie game of all time, Stardew

Valley captivated millions of fervent fans with its addicting gameplay, deeply rich storyline, and impressive score and soundtrack.

Look up Stardew Valley online and you'll quickly find fans who've devoted hundreds of hours to carefully constructing the perfect farm. There aren't many games that can compete with that kind of energy.

Getting Ready for March Radness 2022

Everyone has different tastes and favorites when it comes to gaming but there are few opportunities for the scores to truly be settled between franchises and series. Who will reign supreme between Halo: Infinite and Forza Horizon 5? Will Psychonauts 2 hold their own against Prey? March Radness is the time to find out. We invite all Xbox Ambassadors to join us this month for March Radness, and to see which games reign supreme.